

# The Immortal Hope

Present Aspects of  
the Problem of Immortality

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William Blackwood & Sons  
Edinburgh and London

1910





## PREFACE.

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THIS book is the outcome of a special interest in the various types of thought and feeling, with reference to the problem of Immortality, which are characteristic of the present time. The author has frequently investigated the intellectual and emotional attitudes, towards this question, adopted by thoughtful persons in different departments of life.

The main line of thought starts from the affirmation — warranted by the sciences of Life and Mind as well as by general experience—that the Soul of Man is a living growing power. The idea of "growth," on which special emphasis is laid, is not here used in any narrow sense, as though it were exclusive of self-direction. The

growth of human personality is, so to speak, an achievement, — something realised by conscious activity. The essential nature of mind consists in its creative functions, which are inexhaustible, though they work under conditions which are given. From this principle some very important conclusions follow. It gives us a means of estimating the worth of human personality by considering not merely what men are but what they have it in them to become. It enables us to see that the future life, if it is to be anything at all, must be not a life of mere sameness, or mere endlessness, but a life of continued growth. Above all, it enables us to put the great issue in a better light. To believe in "personal immortality" or in "a future life" is to believe that human personalities as such—not merely the aggregate of the *results* of the best human achievements and ideals, but the *personal lives* from which these achievements spring—are themselves worth preserving, and will not perish in growing.

The purpose of the book is to show that there is no adequate substitute for this belief which can take its place if it is rejected; that it rests

on the fundamental assumption or postulate—implied in all rational life—that the universe which has produced us is rational, and therefore has not endowed life with the highest possibilities simply in order that they may perish; that the apparent indications of the annihilation of personality at death, which are supposed to be warranted by some of the facts of ordinary experience or by some of the conclusions of nineteenth-century science, are only apparent, and break down one by one upon examination. In this connection the author lays special emphasis on what is here called “the instrumental theory” of the relation between body and soul. This theory involves a conception which is not new—which is indeed very old—but which needs restatement to meet the recent results of psychological and physiological science.

The final conclusion is, that it is impossible to find any sound reason either for denying the power of human personality to survive bodily death, or for dismissing the question to the realm of the unknowable. The alleged reasons arise from sheer assumption or dogmatism, or

from unconsciously confused thinking, or from mere limitations of personal experience. The original conviction remains in possession of the field: the nature of personality demands survival and growth beyond death.

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# THE IMMORTAL HOPE.

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## I.

### SOURCES OF THE BELIEF IN SURVIVAL.

OUR object is first to answer the question—What are the chief sources of the vitality possessed by the belief in immortality to-day? Our question is therefore as to the *causes* of the belief—its present causes, not those which may have first suggested it in the infancy of the human race.<sup>1</sup> To ask, “How did this belief begin? What causes suggested it to the primitive mind?” and to ask, “What are the causes of its survival or continuance afterwards?” are two entirely different questions. If any belief, in its beginning, rests on illusions characteristic of the childhood of the race, this will not affect its truth, as *we* hold it, unless our belief were

the same as that of the primitive savages among whom it began, or were held on the same grounds. Why do we state such obvious truths? Because intelligent persons have often suggested that, since the belief in another life, in its original form, rested on primeval superstitions, it is in its developed form, as held to-day, groundless!

The purest and most natural source of belief, or as it is to-day, of a desire to believe, lies in human affection: that those whom we have loved long since may, like the mystic angel faces of Newman's dream, be but lost awhile. We are not concerned to put adequately into words the strength or the bitterness of this longing, ever renewed in the heart of man, age after age,—a longing which, unsatisfied, shakes the fabric of faith to its foundations. We wish only to draw attention to one note in it which not infrequently escapes notice. It is not through selfish fear that we tremble on the brink of death, and cling to the severing link of our existence here; it is a clinging to our fellow-creatures. If the immortal life is to be more than a name for a shadow, it must be a life where men are members one of another, not less, but more than they are here. We desire

an immortality which shall signify a personal life in the full sense of these words, not the existence of a "disembodied spirit" or a "pure, indivisible, immaterial substance"; and a personal life must be not only a *social* but an *embodied* life.

This is a plea which gathers to itself the strength of the whole social nature of man. There are others which have their roots in the universal moral consciousness of man. There is first the great discrepancy which has furnished moralists with a theme since history's dawn: the disproportion between the abilities and just deserts of men, and the recognition given to them in this life. When every allowance is made for the possibility that the inequalities of life are not so great as they appear, and that worldly honour, success, and happiness are not the true reward of moral desert, there remains a range of facts so vast that we cannot number the individuals who in this life have suffered incalculable wrong. "The injustice or inequality seems the more flagrant," says a modern divine and thinker, "when we see that it is the very goodness of the good to which their extra share of suffering, the very badness of the bad to which their immunity

from suffering, is often traceable. On the one hand, the very sensitiveness of conscience which characterises the former, subjects them to inward pangs of self-reproach, to painful moral conflicts and struggles, to bitter distress for the sorrow and sin of the world, of which the latter know nothing; and on the other hand, against these and other causes of suffering the vicious or morally indifferent are case-hardened by their moral insensibility."<sup>2</sup> Observe that it is not merely by their own suffering that men are oppressed. "I feel a pain in my brother's side," is the motto of the higher ethical endeavours of to-day. This feeling is intensified, apart from all questions of desert, by a consciousness of the intolerable conditions in which tens of thousands of our fellow-creatures pass their lives. Grant that in the future the civilised world will see to it that no such black spots disgrace the very name of "civilisation," can there have been no other possibilities for those who have come here only to swarm and fester for a little while, too miserable to be conscious of their misery, shut out for ever from all possibility of living a human life? The great and good, who have known the inward joy of noble work, might be more justly



believed to perish, for they at least have *lived*. Yet for these too there is a claim of equal strength. They are the strong workers of the world, builders of the city not made with hands. Is it possible that these great souls who have accomplished so much—they and all that was in them—have become dust and vapour, and nothing more? Are they to have no share in the abiding glory of their work, and never to see the oncoming of the ideals for which they laboured and died?<sup>3</sup>

It is true that we find strange variations in human sentiment and conviction on this subject. It is possible that inquiries made more or less systematically among intelligent people might suggest that the strength of the desire for another life is over-rated, that a vast number do not care, while many would really prefer annihilation. The difficulty in taking the results of such inquiries as a true indication of human sentiment is that mere moods may have the force of conviction for the time being. We shall have occasion to return to this point in the sequel. At present we are only concerned to show that this real or supposed loss of desire for continuance of life can rarely be taken at its "face value," and this is especially true when it occurs

in more thoughtful or highly-endowed minds. What shall we say of such expressions of feeling as the following? Harriet Martineau speaks of a longing for rest, confessing that she would tire of the Forever. Charles Bray writes: "I am thankful for life, and would willingly do it all over again, but I have no wish to begin again under entirely new conditions; neither can I see how, with a new body and under such altered circumstances, the recollection of my existence here could be of the slightest service to me." Robert Louis Stevenson pleads for a stern struggle with fate while we live, but also for a putting away of "this fairy-tale of an eternal tea-party, and this fancy that our friends will meet us, all ironed out and emasculate, and still be lovable." In the same way a friend of the writer's asks, in regard to another life, "Is it *never* to end? The thought appals. I, little I, to live a million years—and another million—and another! My tiny light to burn for ever! But if there is to be an end, why not at death?"

What is the explanation of this feeling in such minds? We believe that at bottom it is a protest, not against the thought of continued life, but against an inadequate interpretation of "immortality," against the notion of mere Endlessness

without Growth, and therefore against the possibilities of utter discontinuity or eternal sameness. The notion of existence without end, never getting "quit of oneself," is a weariness and even a horror to many minds; and not unreasonably so, for if we adopt such a view, we have dropped the vital element in the thought of a future life. The vitally important factor in the idea is not mere endlessness but continued growth. It is true, growth is the progressive fulfilment or realisation of latent powers; it involves and must involve a process in time. But to suppose that the process is literally endless in time, is to go far beyond anything that experience or reflection warrants in our present state. When it is asked, "If there is an end, why not at death?" the answer is, that the "end" we look for is not annihilation at some point of time; it is the absolute completion of our nature,—the complete fulfilment of the purpose or meaning of each individual life. We have no means of knowing how far this fulfilment will carry us; only we know that it is not realised at death.<sup>4</sup>

We must be on our guard against misunderstanding the very conception of another life. If the conception of a future life is presented in such a form that it seems to fail in giving the



field for the exercise and progress of our best faculties which even this life gives, there is nothing strange in a repudiation of it. "More life, and fuller," is what we want.

Thomas Henry Huxley, who found himself unable to discern a shred of evidence for any life beyond the grave, nevertheless made this significant admission in a letter to Mr John Morley (now Lord Morley of Blackburn): "It is a curious thing that I find my dislike to the thought of extinction increasing as I get older and nearer the goal. It flashes across me at times with a sort of horror that in 1900 I shall know no more of what is going on than I did in 1800."<sup>5</sup> The desire of continued life and growth may not be the conscious possession of all men nor even of some men at all times; but it lies implicit in the human soul, ready to assert its power when the necessary conditions arise. That extremely able historian, thinker, and student of human life, the late W. E. H. Lecky, has said: "It will usually be found, with our existing powers, that life, if not prematurely shortened, is long enough." Yet in the same work he elsewhere speaks in a different tone: "Human life ending in the weakness of old age and the corruption of the tomb will always seem a humiliat-

ing anti-climax, and often a hideous injustice." He speaks of "The belief in the rightful supremacy of conscience, and in an eternal moral law redressing the many wrongs and injustices of life and securing the ultimate triumph of good over evil; the incapacity of earth and earthly things to satisfy our cravings and ideals; the instinctive revolt of human nature against the idea of annihilation, and its capacity for affections and attachments which seem by their intensity to transcend the limits of earth, and in moments of bereavement carry with them the persuasion or conviction of something that endures beyond the grave."<sup>6</sup> The astronomer, Camille Flammarion, realising the realm of mystery abiding in the immensity of the universe—"realm of mystery" only because it is a realm of truth and order as yet unknown, and waiting to be known—has said: "If nothing remains of us, if we are only ephemeral beings of the globe, living for a short time only, how does it all concern us? Science would be only a mockery, like life itself. . . . If we do not live, if the dwellers of all the worlds are only born to die, life has no aim; the universe is futile."

It was no passing mood which spoke in these words of a man of eighty years: "There must

be another life to round this out and clothe it with perfection. The tree in my garden loses nine blossoms where it ripens one globe of fruit, but that does not trouble my tree. The wild things let their young go forth and they are presently forgotten. The flocks and herds are kith and kin, but one is taken and another left, and to-morrow it is all the same. They do not regret their mistakes and sorrow for their sins as I must; their life rounds itself out, and is complete when they die. The insect of an afternoon, the creature of a hundred years,—they have no hauntings of a life before or visions of a life hereafter. But the blossoms fall from the trees of my life, the yearlings die out of my flock, old friends are taken and I am left,—those dear to me as my life, or dearer,—and I cannot prevent this longing after them, because they are part of myself, and I am only as shards and shreds of the whole fair circle my soul demands, if being mine here they are not mine hereafter. And in looking into my own life, I can see where I have missed my way, and I want to try again. I am only a learner, I want still to learn, and turn my lesson to some noble use: so what can this incompleteness mean which haunts me but the intimation of completeness? This claim, as



it seems to me, is founded in fair reason, and we hold the right to see the account come out fair and true on this ground if on no other. These searching sorrows and regrets are the vouchers for it, and their long enduring is the promise that they will hold good. And this pure love for the life we live down here, great and noble in a true proportion of its worth to the world, with the unslain desire that what we gain in this life shall not be lost when we have done with these bodies,—what is all this, though there were no surer word about it, but the hold of the human soul on her own, now and for ever?"

The word "Immortality" is not really the best word to use. Some of its implications suggest too easily that notion of mere endless existence to which we have already made reference—a life like that of a rolling stone whose rollings never cease, which is never worn out and gathers no moss. The genius of St Paul seized on the true conception of the connection between this life and the life to come, and he illustrated it by the growth of a seed. The Soul of Man is a living growing power; and the future life is a continuation of its growth. This is what we mean by Immortality when we use the word. All the diffi-

culties which beset the world-old problem should be examined in the light of this idea.

To know all about growth and how it takes place—whether in the blade of grass or the soul of a man—would be to know everything. Still, there are some things about growth which we do know. The dead thing can never grow; it can only move, and then only when something moves it. The thing which is living and growing is not simply *moving*; it is changing into something new, something more and other than what it has been. And yet, through all these changes, in a sense it is the same thing. The end is very different from the beginning, the oak from the acorn, yet the end belongs to the beginning; the oak belongs to the acorn, and grew out of it, and nothing else could have grown out of it. All the different stages of its growth belong to one another. This is why we say that the acorn and the oak are the same thing: otherwise, you might plant an oak and grow a beech-tree! This unity in growth, through all the changes, is seen most clearly in the growth of our own minds; it comes out whenever we *remember* anything; for then we know that the

present self has a vital bond of connection with the past self.

We may apply this thought to a question which weighs heavily on many minds—so heavily that, even if it does not appeal to ourselves, we cannot turn away from it with lofty indifference, seeing we too are but human. Shall we recognise our friends, our loved ones again? Will they not have grown beyond us? But they will have grown beyond us *on our own line*; qualities which we have in seed, so to speak, with them will be in leaf or flower: if you must use such a spatial metaphor as “growing *beyond* us,” you should add another—“growing *round* us too.” If a grain of wheat could think and feel, and saw a growing ear of wheat, it might well recognise it, just because they are stages in two growths of *the same type*: “you belong to me,—you have grown far more than I, but you are mine,—and what you are I may come to be.”

## II.

MORAL ASPECTS OF THE BELIEF IN  
SURVIVAL.

WE have reviewed the chief human sources from which the Immortal Hope springs. We have been seeking to understand its motives and its meaning, rather than to weigh any evidence for or against its truth. We now raise the question, Is this belief something that we can or ought to dispense with? It is the moral bearings of this question that we have to examine; we again, for the present, leave on one side the question of evidence for or against the belief.

There is a view of human progress which has been urged with great force, at least during the latter part of the nineteenth century, and which has been held capable of superseding the belief in individual immortality.



For if individuals perish by the way, still their work survives, even after they come to be forgotten. The reader will be reminded of George Eliot's fine poem, in which she sets forth this view of the immortality of goodness:—

“Oh may I join the choir invisible  
 Of those immortal dead who live again  
 In minds made better by their presence : live  
 In pulses stirred to generosity,  
 In deeds of daring rectitude, in scorn  
 Of miserable aims that end with self,  
 In thoughts sublime that pierce the night like stars,  
 And with their mild persistence urge man's search  
 To vaster issues. . . . May I reach  
 That purest heaven, be to other souls  
 The cup of strength in some great agony,  
 Enkindle generous ardour, feed pure love,  
 Beget the smiles that have no cruelty ;  
 Be the sweet presence of a good diffused,  
 And in diffusion ever more intense.  
 So shall I join the choir invisible,  
 Whose music is the gladness of the world.”

This aspiration is based on the fact of the “solidarity and continuity” of the human race, which links the separate individuals together, so that the effect of each one's thoughts, desires, and deeds on his fellow-men is real and permanent, and goes far deeper than the



outward appearance would lead us to suppose: and because the progressive victory of goodness and truth is the principal thing, it is inferred that the hope of personal immortality may be dispensed with. I am in the service of the common good; and it matters not if I perish, so long as anything which I may have done towards the realisation of the good survives and is duly worked out. As long as this is assured, we may say of ourselves, like Tennyson's Ulysses:—

“It may be that the gulfs will wash us down;  
It may be we shall touch the happy isles;  
    . . . but something, ere the end,  
Some work of noble note, may yet be done.”

What have we to reply? It is quite true that there is a “universal life” of humanity which is ever growing, deepening, developing, and through the ages advancing to its consummation; it is true that the results of our individual lives and actions are incorporated into this wider life, and that this is the most important guide to the understanding of our conduct and our duties in the present world. Our objection to this doctrine is concerned only with its relevance to the question of

immortality. It may seem a hard saying—but to regard this doctrine as in any sense a substitute for, or an equivalent to, the belief in personal immortality, is mere confused self-deception.

Huxley has a trenchantly expressed passage in which he puts the true alternatives before us:—

“I understand and respect the meaning of the word ‘Soul’ as used by Pagan and Christian philosophers for what they believe to be the imperishable seat of human personality, bearing throughout eternity its burden of woe or its capacity for adoration and love. I confess that my dull moral sense does not enable me to see anything base or selfish in the desire for a future life among the spirits of the just made perfect, or even among a few such poor fallible souls as one has known here below. And if I am not satisfied with the evidence which is offered me that such a soul and such a future *life* exist, I am content to take what is to be had, and to make the best of the brief span of existence which is within my reach, without reviling those whose faith is more robust and whose hopes are richer and fuller. But in the interests of scientific clearness I object to say that I have a soul, when I mean all the while, that my organism has certain mental functions

which, like the rest, are dependent upon its molecular composition and come to an end when I die; and I object still more to affirm that I look to a future life, when all that I mean is, that the influence of my sayings and doings will be more or less felt by a number of people after the physical components of that organism are scattered to the four winds. Throw a stone into the sea, and there is a sense in which it is true that the wavelets that spread around it have an effect through all space and all time. Shall we say that the stone has a future life?"<sup>7</sup>

The charge referred to by Professor Huxley—that the desire for personal immortality is a selfish desire—is frequently made. "Does the wish to live for ever," says Dr Maudsley, "carry more weight of assurance with it, simply as a wish, than there is in the wish to live to old age, which ninety-nine out of a hundred persons have? Is it not merely the barren utterance of human egoism?" It is not to be denied that the desire for another life as affording "compensation" has sometimes been so held as to become a refined form of selfishness. The phrase "other-worldliness" is one of which we have grown tired; but, though the thing it describes has undoubtedly prevailed in the past, it is surely



disappearing as a practical motive. It would make Goodness simply a profitable investment in the Eternal Funds; it is as much a matter of prudence and calculation as any earthly investment, the difference being that in the one case the Funds and the return are everlasting. To seek after righteousness or to submit to sacrifice, for such a reason, is only an extended Epicureanism. To inculcate self-sacrifice by referring to the other side of the account, to the treasures God has in store for those who despise the gold and silver of the earth, is to fall below the level of Pagan virtue as represented by the Spartan Three Hundred or the Roman Decius. But are such "other-worldly" motives really operative in human life to-day? Let the reader appeal to his own experience of human conduct, and see in how many cases any career or pursuit has been adopted, any sacrifice undergone, or any duty done, with the main idea of being personally recompensed in the life to come. We may affirm with confidence that such cases are extremely rare. Even the excessive interest in the salvation of one's own soul—the reproach often brought against certain forms of Evangelical piety—is inseparable from interest in the salvation of others.

When we find the desire for "compensation"

expressed, its real meaning is nothing ignoble or selfish. Frequently we can trace in it a motive like that which animated Milton's great poem, "to assert Eternal Providence, and justify the ways of God to men." It is a desire to *live to see* how so much undeserved suffering is possible if the Eternal Justice never halts. Even when we regard it simply as the expression of a man's interest in his own destiny, it is the opposite of a merely personal or selfish interest. The man who desires the compensation of another life is not desiring anything that he can enjoy by himself, and from which others can be excluded. He only wants to be allowed to go on loving those whom he has loved here; and to go on doing whatever good he has done here, and more. He does not wish for immortal life as a personal reward; in desiring it for himself he is desiring it for others too. Or if you will say that he desires a reward, then—as Tennyson reminds us in his noble poem on "Wages"—it is the reward of *going on*:—

"Glory of Virtue, to fight, to struggle, to right the wrong—

Nay, but she aimed not at glory, no lover of glory she :  
Give her the glory of going on, and still to be.

She desires no isles of the blest, no quiet seats of the just,  
To rest in a golden grove, or to bask in a summer sky ;  
Give her the wages of going on and not to die."

The same thought which is here suggested by Tennyson is expressed in the late Principal Caird's fine words at the conclusion of his "Gifford Lectures":—

"There are rewards in the spiritual life to which it is no selfishness to aspire—nay, which it is of the very essence of a spiritual life to seek after. There is no selfishness in a desire or aspiration which is in itself pure and noble, when it seeks for rewards in its own kind—in the desire of knowledge, for instance, when it seeks for ever larger and fuller opportunities and means of knowledge; or in the love of Art, when it seeks by ever new and fairer creations to attain to an ever advancing realisation of the beautiful. And this holds good in an especial manner of the moral and spiritual desires and affections. To seek for an ever richer and fuller satisfaction of this order of desires is free from all taint of selfishness, because it is to seek after a joy which, while it is the sweetest of which the soul of man is capable, is in its own nature the death of selfishness—the joy of absolute self-surrender to the will of God, and of self-sacrifice for the good of others. More life and fuller than we have ever attained, or can hope on earth to attain, deeper draughts from the eternal springs of thought and joy than here we can ever experi-



ence—this, so far from being a sordid aspiration, is only another expression for the most exalted goodness.”<sup>8</sup>

A charge that seems more weighty is brought against the belief in a life to come. It is asserted that a trust in human improvement and progress or perfection beyond the grave leads to an indifference to the improvement of humanity in this world. We must admit that the belief in another life *may* so be held; we may practically let this belief settle down into a comfortable assurance that “all will be put right” in the next world—even those things which we ought to put right for ourselves in this world. And this would seem to be the drift of a remark made at a prominent ministerial gathering a few years ago: *the immortal hope solves all our social problems*. Social problems have to be solved here, on this earth, and to this great duty Society at large and the Christian Church itself are slowly awakening. There is no necessary connection between belief in a better world to come after death, and neglect of our duty to make this world a better world for man’s brief earthly dwelling. Accordingly we find that those who have laboured most *effectively* for the perfection of humanity on the

earth have believed in its perfection in the heavens.

We affirm that immortality is worth having just because a noble earthly life has an intrinsic worth of its own, and that the only true preparation for the future life is to make this life noble.

Yet it is very easy to slip into assertions which appear to give good ground for the charge to which we have referred. Consider the following from a recent able and thoughtful paper on the subject: "If we are souls, and may believe that little else is of value compared with the soul's culture and development, then life's burdens grow light, its losses cease to be real and become only apparent, and our social and industrial inequalities sink into insignificance." The apparent though unintentional implication of the last two sentences is, that the conditions of earthly life, both for ourselves and others, do not matter; as if such things as starvation, misery, and crime among the lower strata of the population everywhere,—misunderstanding and animosity between employers and workmen,—“Tammany” rule in New York, “sweating” of workers in East London,—are to go on unchecked because death



is not the end of life! It is time, even for those who would dispense with the belief in another life, to admit that the belief is not bound up with a notion so morally offensive and transparently absurd.

We may therefore claim that the immortal hope is not open to any objection from the ethical side. We may, if we will, dispense with it; we may try to meet this life in the stoical spirit of brave resignation which speaks in Huxley's words at the conclusion of his last public utterance: "We are grown men, and must play the man,

‘strong in will

To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield,’

cherishing the good that falls in our way, and bearing the evil, in and around us, with stout hearts set on diminishing it." But we may not, as some "advanced" thinkers do, pride ourselves on renouncing elements and possibilities in life which never ought to be renounced; and though the immortal hope may have been selfishly or ignobly held, yet in itself, in its motives and meaning, it is a pure and high aspiration of the human heart.



## III.

## REASONS FOR BELIEF IN SURVIVAL.

WE now come to our central question. We have seen the chief human sources, motives, or *causes* of belief—as we may call them. We now ask, How far are these causes rational? To what extent do they constitute evidence for regarding the belief as true?

Among the causes of the belief in another life, we found some which are specially influential: the desire that personal affection and love may continue, the desire that personal knowledge, wisdom, and goodness may grow, and the desire that the mistakes of this life may be retrieved, and the results of its misdeeds and sins wrought out and destroyed. Now it has been often said that the existence of a desire is no evidence of the reality of the thing desired. This, however, as we shall see, depends upon what is *implied in*

*the existence* of the desire. We observed that the apparent willingness to dispense with belief in a future life must not be taken at its "face value." The same is true of the desire for the continuance of life. It teaches us to see into human nature more deeply; and human nature then discloses the presence of a purpose, some dim outline of which we are permitted to see. The presence of this purpose is the root of the pervading and ineradicable desires of which we have spoken; and we may express its meaning thus—that all the faculties *distinctive of humanity* may be realised and exercised to their fullest capacity. To the fulfilment of this purpose a future existence is essential. In this life we do not find it possible to be and to do even what we feel and know ourselves capable of. All the highest things, in the life that now is, seem rudimentary, incomplete, preparatory. What is the meaning of this fact?

We are first met by a counter-question—Is it a fact? Do men in general feel this? Now these two questions are entirely different. The first question asks whether human nature is or is not constructed on such a scale that the gradual unfolding of its powers demands more than this life can ever give. The second question

asks whether, if this is true, all men or any men consciously feel or experience its truth. Let us take the latter first. We must observe in passing that there is little doubt that a *shrinking from annihilation* is instinctive and natural to humanity. When the preference for annihilation is expressed, in some cases it is due to personal wrong-doing; in others it is an unreal pose, the result of fashion or prejudice; in many other cases, it is simply lack of imagination. And—to the disgrace of our “civilisation” be it said—we cannot deny that sometimes it is due to conditions which have not only taken away all interest from earthly existence, but have destroyed all desire for better things. But our question now is this: How often is the instinctive shrinking from annihilation transformed into a living desire for immortality as the ever richer growth of personal Love, Wisdom, and Goodness? Is this desire the conscious possession of all men, or does it lie implicit in the human soul, ready to assert its power when the necessary conditions arise? Experience is decisive in favour of the latter alternative; and the necessary conditions so frequently fail to arise, that the fact has been made the basis of a denial of the view of human nature here defended. We are referred to the



innumerable instances of talents suppressed and never felt, for want of education and opportunity, or of natures dwarfed and distorted by evil surroundings; the many whose pleasures are those of the animal, and the many more who appear to find their complete satisfaction in decorous respectability or mere conformity to what happens to be the social standard of their time and place.

All these facts are undeniable. Dr William Osler goes so far as to divide the "civilised" portion of mankind into three groups, with respect to their attitude to immortality: "While accepting a belief in immortality, and accepting the phrases and forms of the prevailing religion, an immense majority live practically uninfluenced by it, except in so far as it ministers to a wholesale dissonance between the inner and the outer life, and diffuses an atmosphere of general insincerity. A second group, larger, perhaps, to-day than ever before in history, put the supernatural altogether out of man's life, and regard the hereafter as only one of the many inventions he has sought out for himself. A third group, ever small and select, lay hold with the anchor of faith upon eternal life as the controlling influence in this one."<sup>2</sup>

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The people who have no living desire for immortality are scattered among the first two of these groups. It is no matter of surprise that they should be numerous. The average man shrinks from thinking about the other world. The traditional doctrines of theology have plunged the thought of another life into artificial horror and gloom as well as artificial brightness and glory; he vaguely perceives that these doctrines are dying, and he has nothing to put in their place; he may or may not deliberately reject them, but he does not know where to go for anything better. Moreover, even with a moderate amount of health and possessions, and a reasonable number of friends, this world occupies most of his conscious energies. He settles down on the broad facts of average experience as the solid realities of life. What we can see, and above all what we can touch and handle, is real. The solid world beneath us, the air we breathe, the regular succession of changes shown on the face of the earth and sky, summer and winter, seed-time and harvest, life and death; the wants and satisfactions of common life, the material aims and tendencies of ordinary civilisation, land, money, trade, with Science as their servant,—

these come to be regarded as the whole extent of what is truly real, and they are quite good enough for many. Thus does Custom "make dotards of us all." The natural self-satisfied complacent existence must be broken up, if the soul's deeper needs are to be revealed. Hence immortality becomes really credible and desirable, or at the least becomes a more real possibility, when in some great trouble the things that seemed so real before are shaken like solid walls in an earthquake; or when under the influence of some high impulse, intellectual or emotional, we rise above ourselves and strain after a greater good.

A far more important question still remains: Is it true that human nature is constructed on such a scale that the gradual unfolding of its possibilities demands more than this life can ever give? This may be true, whether most men consciously feel it or not. We believe it is true.

The very consciousness of evil and imperfection implies our possession of a principle of good which we use as a criterion or standard of judgment; and in its light we condemn our actual life. In the actual visible world man finds himself supreme: supreme, when measured

not by material standards, but by the meaning of the impulses of Love and of Reason. For, with all his weakness and ignorance, man has the will to make good the evils around him, to supply the needs and mend the faults; and this impulse of Love marks humanity as "the last and best of things" on earth. And the light of the impulse of Reason knows no limits. "The peak is high, and the stars are high, but the *thought* of a man is higher." There is a conceivable height which rises far above him and casts a great shadow on his path. So the Pope, in Browning's 'Ring and the Book,' says:

"Is he [man] strong intelligent and good  
Up to his own conceivable height? Nowise."

Man carries with him an ideal unsatisfied by any limited strength, intelligence, or goodness,—the silent prophecy of a future which makes satisfaction with the present for ever impossible.

The issue here is not what men are but what they have it in them to be. It is a question of their possibility. From this point of view, it is the presence of the highest quality (however slight in degree) that confers rank on its possessor. No lower quality, whatever the completeness of its development or the variety of



its effects, can destroy the significance of the rarer endowment though the latter may be only in its faint beginnings. In this way we judge the worth of each single human being. In this way, too, we judge the worth of humanity at large,—by the actual attainments of the best and noblest of the race. Even if we limited our regard to the attainments of these best of men in their rarest and highest moments only, we should be within our rights in taking these moments as a revelation of what humanity really is. They are the possibilities of human nature; and this remains true, however many there may be in whom the higher intellectual, moral, and emotional qualities seem crushed out of life. It remains true that every one who has begun to *use* the gifts of his manhood, has begun to find in them possibilities of higher gifts; and the more faithfully he does all that this life calls for, the more he feels that a thousand such lives would not exhaust his powers. Did any one who has the Love of Man growing within him, or who is possessed by the fascination of Science or Philosophy or Art, ever feel as if his capacity for Love, for Knowledge, or for beautiful creations, could be exhausted? No; the more love grows, the more it feels it can grow; the more

knowledge grows, the more clearly we hear deeps calling unto deeps, waiting to be known. In short, the meaning and purpose of man's intellectual and moral endowments are on a scale immeasurably larger than the needs of this brief life demand.

We must compare man with the creatures beneath him, in this respect. Plants, we know, come each to the perfection of its kind, and then die: if they do not come to perfection, it is not because the ordinary conditions of physical life and growth are too limited, but because some accidental hindrance of unfavourable circumstance prevents their growth. Animals also, as far as we can see, are able to reach in this world the highest kind of existence possible for them; they are able to do the best which it is possible for them to do, and to feel. In scientific language, their lives are adjusted to their environment, or correspond to their surroundings. It is possible for the animal to live a complete animal life in this world; full satisfaction is given to its powers and possibilities, if we take into account its relation to its fellow-creatures and to its offspring. But it is not possible for man to live a complete human life in this world.

There is one fact which may seem to stand

in the way of this contrast between human life and animal life. Some animals, when closely associated with man, show many truly moral qualities usually supposed to belong to man alone,—particularly affection for man such as a human heart might not be ashamed of. This fact, however, is not in dispute; the higher animals are capable of intense feelings, which are very like some of our human feelings. Yet there is far more difference than likeness, because in man these feelings enter into and are formed by a far wider experience; and man's experience again can be interpreted and controlled by his reason. Reason is far more developed in man than it is in any animal; and human reason shows no sign of ever stopping in its development, while it seems as if the reason of animals had already stopped. Any one who thought of denying this, would have to meet a difficult question: taking animals as we know them now, could an animal ever be *trained*, by any kind of outer experience or changes in its environment and its bodily organism, to feel and think as Shakespeare, Sir Isaac Newton, St Paul, felt and thought? If an objector estimates the power of animals by taking them at their highest when trained by many generations



of close association with man, then we must estimate the powers of humanity likewise by observing the high-water marks of its rising tides; and the difference lies in the human capacity of rational development, resulting in an incomparably vaster range of action and experience. Once more, what is the significance of this fact?

To answer this question, we must employ a principle which has played a great part in biological science, and we must give it a wider meaning and application. We shall state it in the form of a general assumption or "postulate" respecting humanity; and we shall show that it rests upon, and in fact is simply one application of, a deeper assumption or postulate respecting the great Whole to which we belong: and this must be granted to save us from complete moral and intellectual scepticism.

The story of the evolution of living beings, as interpreted by modern science, tells us that each new physical quality or power—such as a sharpened sense, or the beginning of a new organ—which survives and grows, does so because it is useful for a purpose and is needed. Utility for a purpose involved in physical life: this is the important factor in the



evolution of the distinctive features of new species in the animal world.

What, then, are the qualities *distinctive* of human life? We have seen the answer to the question. We have seen, without entering into interrupting refinements concerning "animal intelligence" or "animal conscience," that while human life includes animal life, it rises above the latter, and that these higher things distinguishing man from the animals are his rational, moral, and spiritual qualities, which create ideals that so far as we can see are inexhaustible. "Man's life on earth," we may say in the spirit of Robert Browning's thought, "is incomplete because it contains an explicit contradiction between his conception of what he is and what he ought to be. His distinctive mark is the possession of an ideal in the light of which he can always condemn his actual condition. The disparity between actual and ideal is never removed on earth, since, however steadily the man advances, his ideal recedes before him."<sup>10</sup> Everything that is best in us bears witness in itself of a power of life and growth far beyond the utmost afforded by the opportunities of earth.

These distinctively human qualities do not serve

any merely physical purpose; they are not useful in the biological sense. "The moment we enter into the inner circle of human characteristics," says Dr Martineau, "the interpretation of these characteristics as instruments for working the organism utterly fails us." In fact, to explain them, in their present form, by this means, is never attempted; but it is supposed that they were manufactured out of primitive animal wants whose utility to the organism needs no demonstration. We need not dwell here on the growing perception that this process of manufacture is inconceivable, and rests on a fundamental misconception of all that development can possibly mean.<sup>11</sup>

If, then, the realisation of such powers has a purpose, which is not fulfilled until they are put forth to their full capacity, we must suppose that human existence is constructed on a scale such that each man can put them forth in their fulness. This means that the life begun here is continued beyond death, where these endowments may find progressively more adequate scope and employment. At first sight, the analogies of nature's ways do not lead us to regard this suggestion as a very hopeful one. What if the undeniable waste in the animal

and vegetable world has its analogue in the human world? It involves a waste of resource, and a frustration of purpose and capacity; if in the case of man death ends his life, there would only be a similar blighting of promise, and perishing of capacities that have just begun to unfold. Granting that the analogy is a true one, *i.e.*, mere waste in both cases, we must observe that in one it is a waste of physical capacity, in the other a waste of intellectual, moral, and spiritual capacity. Has this difference any significance? Have we a right to hold the growth of human love and reason as worth more—to expect that, though physical life may be wasted, spiritual life will not be? A conviction of the absolute and indefeasible worth of these human ideals answers the question for us. These are the only things that give value to life; and if we have a right to believe anything, we have the strongest moral and intellectual right to believe that these shall abide for ever. We do not, however, admit that the aforesaid analogy is a true one. The physical waste is not so in reality, it is a change of form; but if the progress of humanity continues, while the individual whose efforts con-

tribute to it perish by the wayside, then what perishes is the best part of the whole achievement—the effects of each man's work which remain in his living, growing self. All our ideals are realised for us only by personal activities which grow by their personal use.

The assumption on which our conclusion rests—that human faculty has a purpose—itself rests on a deeper principle, apart from which it is groundless. This deeper assumption is that the world is rational, is constructed according to an order or plan on which we can depend. Otherwise there could be no ground for supposing that our powers fulfil any purpose by their growth, or that the incompleteness of this life has any meaning. And this assumption or trust that the universe is rational, is one kind or direction of trust in God. There is no abstract proof of this principle, because the truth of all reasoning depends on it; but it is progressively verified by acting on it or working it out; and this, as Browning always reminds us, is the one searching test which in the end never fails. Thus at bottom the belief in immortality depends on belief in God, for to believe in God means at least to believe that the creative power which



sustains the universe is rational. We may therefore trust the truth in the immortal hope, not as we trust the results of particular observations and experiments, but as a reasonable faith, based on the essential reasonableness of the world.

"Is there, then," it may be said, "no *certain* knowledge?" This question, which seems so plausible, is yet most unreasonable. Strictly speaking, none of our knowledge is "certain" in the sense of being free from any assumption and from the possibility of future modification. "But, waiving these refinements, cannot we 'know' that our individuality endures, in the sense in which we 'know' any other matter whatsoever,—as a matter of fact and evidence?" The answer is, that future investigation alone can show whether some time we may not attain to actual scientific evidence of the life beyond death; but as a matter of fact, we do not know the reality of that life in the sense in which we know that the earth and planets move round the sun. Why not? Because this and similar results are based on *definitely measurable* facts, constantly and uniformly recurring in the experience of our senses; while the main foundations on which our belief in another life rests

are the higher possibilities of human nature as revealed in moral and spiritual experience. Though these latter facts also form a constant and uniform experience, they are not definite and measurable, and their adequate interpretation is not immediately obvious.

## IV.

BEARINGS OF SCIENTIFIC THEORY ON  
BELIEF IN SURVIVAL.

THE reasoning on which we have dwelt in the preceding pages would be of little avail if there were scientific grounds for accepting the "materialistic" theory of the relation between mind and body.

The old materialism, represented by the theories of Cabanis and Büchner in the middle of the last century, assumed that the brain *produces* consciousness. The standing metaphor for this type of materialism was suggested by Plato,<sup>12</sup> that the soul is to the body as the musical harmony is to the instrument that produces it. Modern writers liken the soul to a "force" which the brain exerts, or to a "state" into which it passes, just as matter under certain conditions passes into a state of incandes-

cence. On the other hand, scientific thinkers like Dubois Reymond, Huxley, and Tyndall, themselves frankly admit that the production of such a thing as consciousness in the brain is more than an enigma—it is almost a self-contradiction. And such assertions as that of Büchner, that “thought is a mode of motion,” have only to be carefully scrutinised in order to reveal themselves as simple or rather complex nonsense.

The brain, like all forms of ponderable matter, is on good grounds believed to consist of innumerable multitudes of minute particles all in a state of almost inconceivably complex movement. The champions of materialism, when their argument is driven to its last stronghold, either take refuge in total ignorance, or else endow the elementary particles of matter with some kind of mental life, in order to “prove” that they can produce mind. Take, for example, Haeckel’s ‘Riddle of the Universe,’ a book which has had a great vogue. His object is, to do away with the idea of the soul; he insists that the mind is the product of the physical and chemical forces which work in the nervous system. Does he prove it? He simply takes it for granted. He admits that



within historic times, so far as we know, life has never been produced except from life. He admits that there is no trace to-day of any knowledge by which chemistry could account for consciousness. But he tells us—as though this ought to be satisfactory to us, and as though we ought to be glad to get rid of the human soul and all spiritual realities so easily—that ages ago chemical conditions on this planet were very different from what they are now; and again—without any evidence—that material atoms have some kind of low grade of consciousness. In the same way another enthusiastic materialist\*—the late Professor W. K. Clifford—assumed what he called “mind-stuff” to be connected with every particle of matter. All this is not science; it is dogmatism.

The more refined form of materialism which would be professed in some quarters at the present day assumes that consciousness is a “function” of the brain. It is evident that this need not mean more than that the manifestation of mental life and personality in this world of

\* The statement sometimes made that Haeckel is not a materialist because he believes in “force” as well as “matter” is only a verbal quibble; for, on his own showing, “force” is never manifested except in material movement.

time and space depends on the brain and nervous system; but more than this is meant, although the theory does not commit itself to the assertion that bare brain and nerve produce mind and feeling. The point of view of which we speak is connected with the results of modern physiology and physiological psychology. The latter study is specially concerned to investigate those mental facts whose bodily concomitants are best known, such as the elementary forms of perception, impulse, and memory. It works on common ground with physiology in studying the different brain - changes which correspond to different states of consciousness; and the *localisation* of these changes in the brain has been determined with considerable success. Now in these investigations the physiologists nearly always forget the vitally important fact which Professor James has stated so forcibly. Is the mind a "function" of the brain? "If we are talking of science strictly understood, function can mean nothing more than bare concomitant variation. When the brain activities change in one way, consciousness changes in another way; when the currents pour through the occipital lobes, consciousness sees things; when through the lower frontal region, consciousness says things to itself;

when they stop, she goes to sleep, &c. In strict science, we can only write the bare fact of concomitance."<sup>13</sup> This fact has suggested the famous hypothesis of "psycho-physical parallelism," that every change in consciousness corresponds to a change in the activity of the brain—a hypothesis which is well grounded as regards the more elementary facts of sensation and ideation, and is assumed to hold throughout. This principle, rightly used, should exclude materialistic and all other assumption as to the real connection between the mental and the physical series, for about this connection it says nothing.<sup>14</sup> It is adopted by careful writers for that reason, as a hypothesis regulating the study of mental in relation to physical facts. But many of the physiological school have given it a materialistic turn by speaking always as if the mental state were entirely "dependent" on the bodily, and assuming that the mental state is "explained" when its corresponding bodily state is assigned. Hence the idea has arisen that the "new" psychology has proved everything characteristic of human personality to be due to the activity of the brain and nervous system; while the truth is, that if such results appear in the end to be proved, it is only



because in the beginning they were taken for granted.<sup>15</sup>

On the whole, modern psychology has nothing to contribute to the solution of our problem. Psychology has effectually disposed of conception of the soul and body as two separate things, absolutely opposed in their nature,—one of which, the soul, was attached ready-made to the body at some point of time. On the contrary, we find it nearly impossible to say where body ends and soul begins; but psychology affords us no means of making clear the distinction between them. And, apart from mere assumptions, we are told nothing as to their connection which is not obvious from common experience. We do not need the psychologist to tell us that there is a good deal of the body in the affections and emotions of the soul, that in deep thought the brain is taxed, that anxiety or joy affects the heart, that other instincts affect other organs; and as a writer like the late R. H. Hutton freely admitted, “the only distinction we know with any certainty between the two is that the soul is more essential to the personality, while the body is less so.”

Superficially regarded, the facts of senile decay and physical death are painfully suggestive of



the dissolution of consciousness. But the suggestion is dispelled when we remember that the only decay which is observed is that of brain and nerve; while all we know is that, under present conditions of our existence in space and time, one mind can only *manifest itself* to others through what we call a system of nerves. We have no right to conclude from the facts of physical decay and dissolution that there is corresponding decay and dissolution on the mental side. If we keep to the facts and avoid speculation—and if we appeal to merely physical facts, we must not “improve” those facts by speculation or confuse our own inferences with them—all we can say is that the physical expression of mind has decayed, that is, the only expression which we at present know of. This suggestion is strongly confirmed by the fact that in healthy old age the worst sign of decay is only a remarkable facility in recalling the past, and a difficulty in feeling any effective interest in what is going on in the present.

It is interesting to find that a writer like John Henry Newman had grasped the idea, involved in what we have said, that the relation between mind and body is essentially this: the body is the instrument of the mind's self-ex-

pression and communication in and with the visible world. He applies the idea thus: "The departed cease to act towards us and before us *through our senses*. They live as they lived before; but that outward frame, through which they were able to hold communion with other men, is in some way, we know not how, separated from them. They remain, but without the usual means of approach towards us, and correspondence with us. As when a man loses his voice or hand, he still exists as before, but cannot any longer talk or write, or hold intercourse with us [by these means], so when he loses not voice or hand only, but his whole frame, or is said to die, there is nothing to show that he is gone; but we have lost our means of apprehending him." <sup>16</sup>

The view which is here suggested is likely to become of increasing importance as time goes on. It is by no means new; but it has been emphasised and adapted to recent physiological knowledge by Professor William James, Dr F. C. S. Schiller, and others.<sup>17</sup> It has at least one logical merit,—*it cannot be disproved*. It explains the dependence of mind on body as an instrumental dependence. That which uses an instrument is dependent, not for existence but

for certain kinds of expression or action, on the instrument which it uses. In this sense the brain is the organ or instrument of mind. The instrument is of almost infinite delicacy and complexity. Different kinds of mental action express themselves by means of the action of different portions of the brain, and so depend instrumentally upon these brain-tracts. And if the instrument breaks down—as in brain disease or decay—the mind's communication with the world is hindered or disordered, or it ceases altogether, but it does not follow that the mind has ceased to exist. A good illustration is furnished by the "dynamo." A dynamo is said to be a machine for "producing" electricity. This is inaccurate, and is quite false if "produce" means "create." A dynamo is a machine for *bringing into action* the electric energy which is already there—it does not create but transmits it and enables it to manifest itself. The transmission of the force at that particular spot and in that particular way depends entirely on that particular dynamo; but the force is not destroyed if the machine breaks down—it merely ceases to be transmitted *there*. Those who hold the instrumental theory to be the truest one are prepared to maintain that the mechanism



of brain and nerve does not in any way manufacture the mind, but manifests it or enables it to express itself or transmit its activities; and in manifesting these activities, the brain and nervous system control and confine them within certain limits. If an injury to the brain appears to injure or destroy consciousness, what really happens is that the self-expression of that consciousness in those particular ways is injured or destroyed.

Probably the difficulty which weighs most with many of the most fair-minded inquirers is the great mass of evidence which appears to prove "the dependence of *all memory*, and therefore of all developed personality, on the persistence of the physical basis, of the physical changes produced in the brain in the course of each moment of experience." To discuss this question fully would lead us into some of the hardest questions in the psychology and physiology of memory; but we cannot pass the question by without attempting to show the bearing of the instrumental theory upon it.

First, however, we must form a more definite idea of what is meant by the "physical basis of memory." What becomes of all our mental acquisitions when we are not remembering them



or consciously using them in any way? We shall be led to an answer if we take a familiar example. Consider the process of recollecting a name. The endeavour to recollect is a conscious process, but its success or failure depends on another factor. It depends on the effects of our previous experiences in which that name occurred. We noticed the name or in some other way became acquainted with it, and this experience has left an after-effect, a more or less permanent mental trace or disposition which persists below the level of consciousness. "Conditions connected with this trace or *disposition* determine whether the name will be recalled at once, or after prolonged effort, or not at all. It may happen that we fail to remember the name while we are trying to do so, and that it suddenly emerges into consciousness after an interval during which we have been occupied with other matters or have been asleep. This implies that our conscious effort has set going an unconscious process which continues after the conscious effort has ceased."<sup>18</sup> Now it is convenient, for the purposes of physiological science, and sometimes also for psychological purposes, to treat these various psychical dispositions as if they were nothing but activities of the brain.

But because this is convenient for certain special investigations as a matter of method, it does not follow that it is true fundamentally and as a matter of real existence. It cannot be thus true—or we should have all the absurdities of materialism on our hands again. For the mental disposition *is* what it *does*; and what it does is to produce certain thoughts, feelings, or impulses, and to a certain extent control mental operations of which we are conscious; hence if it is really nothing but a redistribution of molecular motion in the brain,—then such motion can produce out of itself states of consciousness, which is absurd.

The psychical dispositions which form the basis of memory are genuinely mental processes; but experimental evidence makes it certain that they are *accompanied* by changes in particular parts of the brain, and that the two kinds of fact,—the mental process and the brain process,—*vary together* in ways that are by no means simple. What the evidence appears to suggest is (for example) that an injury to a minute portion of the brain simply empties the mind of a whole class of ideas, as when a patient cannot tell the meaning even of the most common words when he *sees* them (though he under-

stands them quite well when he *hears* them). It would seem as if the mental disposition which ought to have produced ideas of the meanings as soon as the words were seen, could not give rise to this act of memory unless the corresponding brain process were acting in a healthy way. From the point of view of the instrumental theory, we should expect beforehand that the injury to the brain would prevent the mental process from expressing itself in any way appreciable by our senses as we examine the patient. But it seems as if the patient not only cannot express to other people the ideas required, but cannot even consciously form them for himself. We must affirm, however, that even this extreme case is covered by the instrumental theory. The patient is "in the body"; he is not free of the material brain but is living through it. Hence a diseased function of his brain must form a positive obstruction to the healthy activity of the corresponding mental function; while at the same time this fact does not prove that the operation of memory is impossible when separated altogether from the mechanical brain-function whether healthy or diseased.<sup>10</sup>

The instrumental theory, then, appears to



destroy the force of the argument that the apparent dependence of memory on the activity of different portions of the brain disproves personal survival of bodily death. But the argument in question raises a very interesting (though, we must admit, a very speculative) question as to the embodiment of the spirit in the life beyond.

In speaking of the brain, we have hitherto taken for granted that physiological science is right in regarding the brain as nothing but a mechanism, though an inconceivably complex and delicate mechanism. It must be borne in mind that this too is only an assumption. It is certain that the activities of some portions of the brain have a mechanical aspect; but this does not prove that there is nothing but mechanism in the brain. We must bring this question under a wider one, about which we may with confidence make the following statement. The whole tendency of recent science is to show that there are kinds of matter and sources of energy subtler and more complex than were dreamt of,—that the material universe has in it resources deeper than any of which we have the faintest inkling, deeper than our deepest thought can reach so long as our bodily senses are limited as



they now are. Apply this to the particular question which we have raised. The visible and tangible body decays in the grave: is this all? No; for science explains the body as consisting of material molecules, invisible and intangible, in highly organised forms of combination. These molecules enter into other combinations in the earth: but were they the whole of the body? Here we touch the root of the matter. If it is true that science does but touch the outer edge of the reality with which it deals with its theories of mechanical and molecular action, it is also true that science is opening up to us a material universe which involves possibilities of embodied existence far larger than any which science has destroyed. We shall not pursue this thought further in its reference to the possible *embodied existence* of the "dead": although we must take up the main idea again in its reference to the possibility of an *unseen universe*. We shall content ourselves with emphasising the suggestion that the ancient belief in a "resurrection body"—though it is a belief which has been ignorantly held and crudely expressed—nevertheless contains within it an element of permanent truth and value.

It used to be feared that the theory of

evolution, as presented in Darwin's 'Origin of Species' and 'Descent of Man,' had disposed of the belief that man is in any true sense a spiritual being. The supposed ape-like ancestor jeopardised every real interest of the human soul. And yet what theory of descent, in past ages, could be more disturbing — if questions of beginning are of any relevance at all — than the evident fact that the beginning of every individual life is purely animal? Why should the theory be deemed of such vast and terrible significance, if the physiological fact is of no importance? Whatever view we may take as to the bearing of the physiological beginning of each individual life on the question of its destiny, that view must *a fortiori* hold good of the beginning of the race. We must avoid the use of the word "origin," which is ambiguous and misleading; we have no scientific right to speak of anything more than the historical beginning in time; the mere substitution of the accurate term "beginning" for the inaccurate one "origin," in these too often confused discussions, is enough to show the true bearing of what is at issue; for "origin" suggests a *causal explanation* which as a matter of fact is not given.

If, then, it is asked, "When does the existence of the soul, or its connection with the body, begin?" we must be clear as to the meaning of our terms. If the soul were created with a complete outfit of faculties, ready in all respects for the plunge into the life of sense, it would be inevitable that the question should be pressed, at what point in the history of the body was the ready-made soul joined on to it, or whether the soul pre-existed. But now we know that the beginning of the soul could not have been after this manner. What does experience tell us as to its beginning? As we try to work backwards in the history of mind, with the aid of comparison and analogy, we find ourselves coming nearer and nearer to a state of what Herbert Spencer would call "indefinite homogeneity"; the differences that were distinct in the adult mind disappear, complexity grows less and less, until we come to a state of vague feeling which must still be called consciousness, but from which knowledge, will, and all distinct sensations and mental images, are absent. At what point in the physiological development of the organism, previous to birth, this first faint dawn of "sentience" emerges, we do not know and we cannot guess. We have good reason to believe



that in its beginning the consciousness of the human *fœtus* is analogous to that of the oyster, perhaps even to that of the amœba, and that the gradual growth in complexity of nervous structure proceeds along with growth in complexity of conscious life. We know also that the physical connection between parents and offspring is in some mysterious way the basis of a spiritual connection. Beyond this our conclusions have to be altogether speculative. But there is a serious confusion of thought in imagining that this question of the beginning is the fundamental one. The beginning of any growth shows us, as far as the outer appearance goes, nothing even to tell us what the thing is, far less what it is to be: there is a point at which the *ovum* of man is indistinguishable from that of any invertebrate animal; at a later point in its development, it might be that of any vertebrate animal; at a still later point, that of any mammal, and so on. As the capacities of any growing thing gradually emerge, we have gradually better ground for inferring what it will come to be; and the case of mental growth is on the whole an analogous one. In this way the profound remark which has come down to us from Aristotle is seen to be of ever-increasing sig-



nificance. The end may throw light on the beginning, but not the beginning on the end. It is not impossible that we shall have to reverse the agnosticism of the last century, and admit that we have clearer knowledge of ends than of beginnings. We may be agnostic as regards the speculative questions of evolutionary psychology, while we hold firmly and with good reason to the great principle that for each person growth continues, and death is but a stage in life.

## V.

THE CONCEPTION OF AN INVISIBLE  
WORLD.

OUR discussion of the instrumental theory did not aim at bringing forward considerations which constitute evidence directly in favour of the power of human personality to survive bodily death; but it appears to us that these considerations of logical necessity destroy the force of the argument against survival, so far as that argument is based on any merely hypothetical interpretation of the facts of decay and dissolution of body, brain, and nerve: and the current conception of mind as merely a function of the brain is a merely hypothetical interpretation of the facts.

In explaining the conception of death as only the destruction of *the ordinarily observed means by which the "dead" were able to act towards us*

*and communicate with us through our senses, we silently assumed that they ceased altogether to influence the minds or bodies of the living. This assumption, of course, cannot be taken for granted without inquiry. It may be possible for the "dead" to act towards us and influence us in new ways, although the visible bodily frame, through which they lived in this world, has been destroyed. The numerous body of "spiritualists" claim that there are facts proving such influence, and affording us direct experience of a life beyond death. "Spiritualism" is a theory to account for certain alleged facts. Are they genuine facts? If so, are we compelled to adopt that theory of their origin?*

Before dealing directly with these two questions, it will help us on our way if we seriously consider what are the real possibilities of the case. The attitude of thought and feeling expressed in Browning's bitter satire, "*Sludge the Medium*," can be understood by many who have come in contact with the fraud and credulity mingled with so much of the alleged evidence of communications from the dead. On the other hand, we must at once reject, as unscientific, unphilosophical, and absurd, such a statement as the following, made by an eminent Professor of

Experimental Psychology, who, in reference to the question whether the "dead" enter into communication with us by using the brains and voices or hands of living men, has declared that "the scientist does not admit a compromise; with regard to this he flatly denies the possibility; . . . the facts (as they are claimed) do not exist, and never will exist."<sup>20</sup> Persons who thus prejudge the very possibility of such evidence, and dogmatise in advance of all possible experience, simply write themselves down as apostles of unreason.

We refer to this matter here not because we intend to discuss any of the alleged evidence in detail; but in order to apply our fundamental conception (of the life beyond death) to the question, what might be expected beforehand regarding the nature and possibility of communications from the "dead,"—and also in order to bring out another fundamental conception which, it appears, must be granted if such communications are to be possible. We shall deal with this latter conception first. Can it be said that we are in the midst of an *unseen world*? Before we can approach an answer to this question, we must ask what is meant by an "unseen world." John Henry Newman has given an



answer which is clear, eloquent, and sufficient to serve as an illustration of what is meant. "The world we see, we know to exist because we see it. We have but to lift up our eyes and look around us and we have proof of it. We see sun, moon, and stars, hills and valleys, woods and plains, seas and rivers. And again we see men, and the works of men; we see cities and stately buildings, and their inhabitants, men running to and fro, and busying themselves to provide for themselves and their families, or to accomplish great designs, or for the very business' sake. All that meets our eye forms one world. It is an immense world; it reaches to the stars. Thousands and thousands of years might we speed up to the sky, and though we were swifter than the light itself, we should not reach them all. They are at distances from us greater than any that is assignable. So high, so wide, so deep is the world; and yet it also comes very near and close to us. It is everywhere, and it seems to leave no room for any other world. And yet, in spite of this universal world we see, there is another world quite as far-spreading, quite as close to us, and more wonderful; another world all around us, though we see it not, and more wonderful than the world

we see, for this reason, if for no other, that we do not see it. All around us are numberless objects, coming and going, watching, working, or waiting, which we see not. This is that other world which the eyes reach not unto."

Newman proceeds to dwell on the profound thought that we may be in actual relation with all parts of the universal realm of being, seen and unseen, and actually influenced by it all, although we may be distinctly conscious only of what appeals to us by means of our senses: "Of the real things which lie around us, one great department comes to us and accosts us through our bodily organs, . . . it is brought home to us through our senses. Only while the objects which belong to it act upon us, they make their presence known. We are sensible of them at the time, or are conscious that we see them; we not only hold intercourse, but know that we do. They act upon us, and we know it: we act upon them in turn, and know that we do. But all this does not interfere with the existence of that other world, which I speak of as acting upon us, though not impressing us with the consciousness that it does so. It may as really be present and as really exert an influence as the world which reveals itself to our senses."

Finally, he identifies the unseen world with the world of spirits: "We are, then, in a world of spirits as well as in a world of sense, and we hold communion with it, and take part in it, though we are not conscious of doing so." The assertions of modern "spiritualism" are, first, that recognisable messages do come from the world of spirits to persons living in the world of sense; and, in the second place, that it is desirable for us to endeavour to obtain as many such messages as possible. The first assertion Newman would probably have admitted only so far as he ascribed the phenomena to diabolic agency; the second, he would have absolutely and fervently denied. The question, however, cannot be settled by mere theological prepossessions such as these.

Our immediate question is, as to the elements of truth in Newman's thought of the vast universe of reality as embracing both a "visible" and an "invisible" world. What has science to tell us of the world which we can see and touch? Science tells us that much of what we ascribe to the real world which our senses show us, is not real, in the way in which we usually imagine it to be: it is the effect on our sensitive nerve-organisation of invisible and intangible forces.



Science traces the history of these forces back through ages in the past, and shows their operation through the boundless depths of space around us. She familiarises us with the thought of one universal invisible Energy in all changes, ever being transformed and transferred from one manifestation to another, from one mode of motion to another, of which it might be said, in the words of the earth-spirit in "Faust,"

"At the roaring loom of time I ply,  
And weave for God the garment thou seest Him by."

To this Energy we can assign no limits of time or space; but every intelligent step that Science takes helps us to know that it is *one*, and that all forces of the universe are only varieties and manifestations of it.

To what extent are the various forms of this Energy directly revealed to our senses? The answer is this. Beyond all that eye may see, that ear may hear, that hands may feel, outside of taste or smell, outside of any native sense, there lies an unseen, unheard, unfelt universe, whose fringe Science is just beginning to explore. Imagine a simple diagram drawn as follows: an *upright band* of moderate width, supposed to be continued indefinitely above and below, and



coloured black throughout, except where in its middle region it is crossed by a thin *horizontal line* of white. The white line represents the portion of the world which is directly revealed to our senses; the unlimited stretch of black, above and below, represents the unexplored regions for which we have no special sense-organ. Whatever is discovered of the energies belonging to these regions, is discovered not because they affect any sense-organs of ours but because Science has been able to construct instruments delicate enough to manifest some of their effects. The "X-rays," and the electric-waves employed in the wireless telegraphy, are examples of what we have just said.

These and many other similar considerations fully warrant what was said by Sir Oliver Lodge in a recent address to the Society for Psychical Research:<sup>21</sup> "To suppose that we know all of this great and wonderful universe, or to suppose that we have grasped its main outline, that we realise pretty completely not only what is in it, but the still more stupendous problem of what is not and cannot be in it—is a presumptuous exercise of limited intelligence, only possible to a certain very practical and useful order of brain, which has good solid work of a commonplace

kind to do in the world, and which has been restricted in its outlook, let us say by Providence, in order that it may do that one thing and do it well. Some of these persons have been men of science, others have been men of letters, some of them again politicians and men of business: some few of them have called themselves philosophers, but the world has not thought them its greatest philosophers." Knowing what we already know of the material universe, of its immense scope; realising the absurdity of the idea that our few senses have instructed us concerning all the possibilities of embodied existence; it seems impossible to deny that there may be in space an immense range of intelligent life of which we know nothing.

So far from being an unfounded imagination or a mere relic of primeval superstition, the conception of an unseen world is continually suggested by the progress of science. So regarded, the unseen world is still a sensible world—that is, a world capable of being revealed to bodily senses of some kind, however different from ours in their manner of working or in their degree of sensitiveness.

We may, or rather must, go further than this. If our senses were so transformed that they

became as sensitive as the finest instruments known in modern laboratories ; if the organisation of our sensitive nervous system increased beyond comparison in the fineness of its responsive power ; if all the dark regions in our symbolic diagram became clear to us ; still, we should have no right to conclude that existence was limited to what could thus be manifested to us. This thought introduces us to an idea, or rather an ideal, familiar to many of the greatest religious thinkers of the world, in East and West, in ancient and modern times. Existence in space involves limitations,—such as the necessity of passing from point to point by actual movement ; existence in time involves limitations,—such as the necessity of distinguishing the “past” as that which “no longer” exists, and the “future” as that which does “not yet” exist. But the reality of a life, or as we might say, of a world not subject to the limits imposed by space and time, has been affirmed by the thinkers of whom we speak, and affirmed by many of them as a matter of personal experience. Thus we attain to the conception of a world of the absolutely supersensual, the essentially spiritual, a world of life which is neither far nor near, not past, present, or future, but Eternal. A mediæval



thinker thus explained this conception: "Eternity is *the complete and perfect possession of unlimited life all at once*. This becomes clearer by the comparison of the things of time. For whatever lives in time, itself present, proceeds from past to future. There is nothing which is established in time, which can embrace the whole space of its life at once. What pertains to to-morrow, it has not yet laid hold of; what pertains to yesterday it has already lost; and even in the life of to-day, ye live only in the fluctuating and transitory moment. Whatsoever, then, endures the conditions of time,—although, as Aristotle thought of the universe, it should never have begun and should never cease to be, and its life should be stretched out in infinity of time,—would not yet deserve on that account to be regarded as eternal: For it does not comprehend and embrace the whole space of its life, infinite though that life may be, at once; but the future it hath not yet, and the past it hath no longer. That, then, which embraces and possesses the whole plenitude of unlimited life at once, from which nought of the future is absent, from which nought of the past has flowed away, *that* is rightly deemed eternal; and that of necessity, in possession of itself, must ever be present to



itself, and must grasp the infinity of moving time as present." <sup>22</sup>

We have, then, these two conceptions of the unseen world,—both of them being suggested by elements in human experience. According to the first conception, it is a world of finite beings existing, changing, and living in relations to one another analogous to (though different from) those which hold in the visible world. According to the second conception, it is "the complete and perfect possession of unlimited life all at once,"—an all-inclusive life, comprehending all, explaining all. With the general religious and philosophical value of this conception of the Divine Life we are not now concerned, except in one respect, on which we would lay the utmost emphasis. The two views of the unseen world are not mutually exclusive, as many persons suppose. The reality of an Eternal World or Eternal Life no more excludes the reality of an *invisible* world of finite growing beings, than it excludes the reality of the actual *visible* world of such beings. It may or may not be difficult to reconcile the conception of a real Eternity with the reality of actual experience in space and time; but the conception of an invisible world

in space and time presents no additional difficulty.

There is no reason whatever for supposing that the next adjacent thing to the mere surface-show of our ordinary experience is the realm of the absolutely supersensual and the Eternal. From the scientific point of view—as we have seen—there are real reasons for supposing the contrary, and for affirming the possibility of a world of invisible beings. And we have already pointed out that our fundamental conception of life beyond death does not carry with it the assumption of a mere endless existence in time; it does not exclude the assumption that the individual life may in the end find its completion in a life which is eternal. What we affirm is that the completion of personal life must mean the fullest realisation and development of all the possibilities of human personality; and what we deny is, that this completion can possibly be realised at death.

The position at which we have arrived is that which Herbert Spencer stated to be “the absolute certainty,”—that “we are ever in the presence of an Infinite and Eternal Energy from which all things proceed,”—manifested everywhere as a majestic and inviolable Order. If

we admit also that the being of this Power may be spiritually interpreted, we come to the position set forth in the familiar lines:—

“ All are but parts of one stupendous whole  
 Whose body Nature is, and God the soul,—  
 That, changed through all, and yet in all the same,  
 Great in the earth as in the ethereal frame,  
 Warms in the sun, refreshes in the breeze,  
 Glows in the stars, and blossoms in the trees,  
 Lives through all life, extends through all extent.  
 All Nature is but Art, unknown to thee,  
 All chance, direction which thou canst not see,  
 All discord, harmony not understood.  
     . . . The Universal Cause  
 Acts to one end, but acts by various laws.  
 Nothing is foreign ; parts relate to whole ;  
 One all-extending, all-preserving Soul  
 Connects each being, greatest with the least.” <sup>23</sup>

The two worlds are not so shut off from one another as is often supposed. The usual assumption of the “plain man” is, that the visible and invisible worlds (if there is an invisible world!) are absolutely unrelated. The usual assumption made by all Religion of the more genuine sort is, that the relationship is ethical and spiritual alone, and strictly limited to that one channel. We may affirm with confidence that if the relationship exists at all, it is not thus limited ; it must be one of the great struc-



tural facts of the universe, and involve laws as persistent and as universal as our known laws of energy or of motion. Spencer's use of the word *Energy* (in the sentence quoted above) is suggestive. The unity of the universe,—the conception set forth in the lines quoted from Pope,—is, as it were, a living energetic unity; nothing is really static or stagnant, rigid or immovable. Every single being, from the most minute material particle to the most majestic star or the noblest human soul, is a centre of energy, giving and taking active influences from all parts of the whole.

We might therefore expect beforehand that, under the pressure of natural selection and the general needs of life, the human race would develop capacities for consciously recognising *only a limited range* of these influences, on which a practical working knowledge of the world is based. Such is the case with the energies of the universe which appeal to our bodily senses. But, beside these familiar, customary, or "normal" sources of knowledge, we might expect the multitudinous energies which are always besetting us on every side mentally and physically, to give rise sometimes to unfamiliar or "supernormal" impressions, which in the case of most persons would be real



enough to influence feeling but too vague to be translated into definite ideas, while in other cases such impressions may be the means of acquiring information, as when news travels in an "inexplicable" way over vast spaces in a short time, among "uncivilised" races. We might also expect that (as Newman suggested) we should be subject to innumerable impressions which really influence us, but of which we have not even the vaguest consciousness.

Let not the reader imagine that all this is merely "unscientific." Recent conceptions of "matter," "electricity," and "ether," involve the conclusion that our physical organisation is penetrated by a network of energies, subtler than our subtlest nerves, yet linking us with the central forces of the world. We assume this; we assume that there is a similar universality of relationship on the mental side also; we assume that energies from the invisible realms of the surrounding universe give rise to impressions (either immediately on the mind or through the medium of the brain) outside the limits of the ordinary mental faculties and bodily senses; we assume that some of these impressions are felt, and of these, again, that some are capable of being translated into ideas,

imaginings, or apparently perceptible forms. And since our relationship with the universe is not one-sided, since we "give" as well as "take," since the receipt of an impression is itself an activity, we might expect to find traces in human nature of mental faculties beyond those required for existence in the present world of our senses, which is only a small fragment of the universe.

Now it is well known that there exists, throughout the human race, and distributed as widely in time as in space, an accumulation of traditions and assertions of influences and communications from some unseen realm,—things "supernatural," seen and heard by mortals. The attitude of what is called "spiritualism" is a comparatively recent development. It is well known also that there has been a persistent element of deliberate deception at the bottom of many such experiences, in ancient and modern times,—deception carried on by persons interested in maintaining beliefs in the supernatural; and likewise a persistent element of self-delusion. In modern "civilised" countries the majority of persons dismiss the whole mass of such allegations as mere superstition. This attitude is modified only by the tradition of

Protestant theology, which accepts such stories when they occur in the Bible, and by the tradition of Roman Catholic theology, which accepts them also in connection with the lives and relics of the Saints.

Most moderns who have given any attention to the matter are influenced by considerations very similar to the famous argument of David Hume concerning miracles. Hume said that when testimony is offered concerning an event of the class vaguely described as "supernatural," it is more likely (more in accord with the ordinary course of experience) that the testimony should be wrong than that the event should really have occurred. The sole truth in this contention is, that evidence in favour of an event which is contrary to ordinary experience must be specially strong evidence. The strength of the testimony must be in proportion to the *extra-ordinary* character of the event. We will not inquire how much of the accumulation of traditions, to which we have referred, would stand this test; but to dismiss the whole as nothing but deception and delusion would be as irrational as to refuse credence to any human statement because of the abstract possibility that a man may be a liar.



Nearly thirty years ago a group of friends who had been inquiring into the "spiritualistic" phenomena founded a Society for systematic investigation of the truth and error in world-wide beliefs which are usually classed as "superstitions." Among the founders were the late Professor Sidgwick, Mrs Sidgwick, the late Edmund Gurney, the late F. W. H. Myers, and Professor Barrett; and soon afterwards Mr Frank Podmore, Professor William James, Sir Oliver Lodge, and other equally well-known names, were added to the list of active members and workers. The alleged occurrences which the Society felt itself called upon to investigate contained a strange mixture of conscious and unconscious deception. If a quack were to offer us *radium* by the pound, his pretension would bear the same relation to the toil of the modern chemist, as the pretensions of some purveyors of the supernatural bear to the laborious investigations into these matters which are really required. And just as the chemist has to handle tons of ordinary matter before he can discover traces of those "radio-active" substances which have revealed some of Nature's most carefully-hidden secrets,—so only by the most careful research can we detect amid ordinary human



mental activities traces of what may be the promise and potency of powers as yet unrevealed.

The Society for Psychical Research has accumulated a mass of evidence which cannot be ignored, the total effect of which is to show that the world of mind is infinitely more complex than was suspected, and that there are latent in it capacities beyond the scope of those familiar to common life, and different in their mode of action. Hypnotism or artificial somnambulism had long been recognised by physicians and even by scientific psychologists; but other facts were brought to light, which the psychology of the schools refuses to recognise. There is such a thing as a vision or impression of events distant in space or time, from its simple form in unconscious or automatic writing up to a detailed knowledge of affairs with which there was no normal means of acquaintance. There is such a thing as thought-transference; not by mere muscle-reading, or unconscious whispering, for after all necessary sifting the alleged facts are found to give reasonable force to the hypothesis that under certain unknown conditions communication is possible between one mind and another, or one brain and another, through none of the usually recognised channels of sense

("telepathy"). There is such a thing as the vision of an apparition of an absent person at some crisis in the life of the latter, and especially at or near the point of death; between death and apparitions of the dying a connection exists which is not due to chance alone. The facts confirm our previous suggestion that the mind is capable of receiving, either directly or through the medium of the senses, impressions which under certain conditions are naturally translated into apparently perceptible forms.

It is a mistake to describe such facts as "supernatural." The suggestions of this word are all in the wrong direction. And to dismiss the evidence for any unusual phenomena because of the notion that they are "contrary to *natural law*, and therefore impossible," is specially absurd. An occurrence may be thoroughly "natural" and yet contrary to some of nature's *customs* (not *laws*),—or, to be more precise, contrary to or supplementary to our own usual experience. Between this and the "impossible" there is a great gulf fixed.

The discovery of these generally unrecognised human faculties has distinctly weakened the evidence for the agency of the "dead," and greatly complicated the consideration of such

evidence. The indications which, taken at their face-value, point to communications between the living and the "dead," are seen often to be possible cases of telepathy. There is evidence for the reality of telepathy not only as a voluntary act, but as an unconscious act between living persons; so that we may in reality be dealing only with messages between the living and the living, not between the living and the "dead." These and similar considerations account for a verdict like that of Mr F. Podmore: "If we admit that experience only can prove or disprove the possibility [of communications from the 'dead'], we must further recognise that the proof which we are seeking is not likely to be salient or irresistible. We can hardly imagine any *single incident* which would give us satisfactory proof of the survival of a human personality. The proof or disproof must in its nature be cumulative. At a certain stage of the accumulation we may say 'The facts are no doubt not inconsistent with the hypothesis of the agency of the "dead"; but there are other interpretations, in the present state of our knowledge, equally adequate and at least equally probable.' This is the stage at which our inquiry would seem now to have arrived. We have



accumulated a large number of observations and experiments, open to various interpretations, but open amongst others to this particular interpretation, that they indicate in some fashion the presence of the 'dead.' The man who at the present stage of the inquiry invites us, on the strength (or weakness) of the evidence so far available, to acclaim the proof of human immortality, may be doing serious injury to his own cause. But the other man, who—because our present ignorance does not enable us to decide what is the true meaning of these elusive 'seemings'—condemns the whole inquiry as abortive, has surely no right to speak in the name of science," or of common-sense.<sup>24</sup>

On the other hand, some of the most careful workers have convinced themselves that, amid a great deal of irrelevant material, certain indications do unmistakably point to communications between the living and the "dead"; and in particular, that an examination of the records of "automatic" writing,—written through the hands of different persons,—points to a definite plan on the part of a group of the "dead" whereby they hope to establish the fact of their continued personal identity in the unseen world.<sup>25</sup>



The reader will remember the main conception of the life beyond death, advocated in this book: that it is a continuation and development of personal life, in which the mistakes of this life may be retrieved, and the results of its misdeeds and sins be wrought out and destroyed, and knowledge, wisdom, and goodness may grow. In the light of this conception, what should we expect, beforehand, as regards the possibility of communications from the "dead"? We should *not* expect that the survival of bodily death at once confers on any person intellectual and volitional powers vastly greater than those which he possessed in this life, as though he would at once acquire omniscience of memory and arch-angelic powers of understanding and overcoming difficulties. This assumption, which is constantly made, and taken for granted without a word of discussion, is seen to be utterly groundless. We may not, therefore, lay down beforehand the standard to which such communications should conform; nor have we any right to assume that the failure of a particular kind of test, devised by ourselves, is conclusive. The "dead" carry with them the known mental constitution of humanity into a phase of experience which is partly new (not absolutely new,—

for that would involve an absolute breach of continuity). They have to adapt themselves to conditions not simply the same as those with which they were familiar here. This new life must necessarily occupy much of their energy; and—just as here—the experience and its opportunities will be different according to the capacity, intelligence, character, and strength of will of the different personalities who enter into it. In particular, they will differ in their memories of earthly life, just as the living differ in the amount of their past which they can voluntarily recall. Some persons seem to think that if consciousness in the future state does not comprise and comprehend everything in the present state, personal identity is lost. But my personal identity is not lost because I cannot now remember everything in my past; nor is it necessary that in any future state I should remember everything. There are whole tracts of my past experiences and actions which I cannot now recall by any deliberate effort. Even here, life absorbs our energies and denies to many of us the leisure to remember much; how much more must it be so under the new conditions! Yet even there, there must be some whose wider mental grasp carries with it living

memories of much of their earthly experience, and whose emotions turn these memories into a living interest in the things of earth. By saying that this must be so, we mean that it is logically involved in our fundamental conception of the future life that there shall be these differences of intellectual and volitional power, and that some of the "dead" shall experience a strong desire to communicate with the living, leading perhaps to endeavours to conquer the difficulties in the way. You may obtain the beginnings of a faint conception of what these difficulties probably are, if you imagine yourself trying to *prove* your identity to your friends at a distance through a telephone which acts intermittently,—and very imperfectly even then,—and which takes up and delivers other messages in confusion with your own.

We have spoken of the "known" mental constitution of humanity. These super-normal human faculties, generally unrecognised, but, like radium, making their existence known to those who search deep enough,—these are, even when taken at their very lowest value, a proof that the constitution of human nature is more complex than we can as yet conceive. Mr F. W. H. Myers attacked the question from this



point of view. He has formulated a theory which, he considers, harmonises the whole range of facts above-mentioned, together with such abnormally disordered states of consciousness as those exemplified in hysteria and divided personality, and the apparent facts of spirit-possession, ecstatic vision, and so forth. A similar hypothesis is extended by Professor William James to cover the conditions known as "conversion" (religious and non-religious), apparent providential answers to prayer, and healings of bodily disease through none of the usually recognised physical means.<sup>20</sup> The theory is that our normal consciousness is in continuous connection with a larger consciousness of which we do not know the extent (the "sub-liminal self.") This region is the larger part of each of us; in fact, our ordinary waking consciousness (the "supra-liminal self") is only one aspect or phase of the total psychical life,—a portion of it evolved for adaptation to our natural environment. The sub-liminal is the abode of everything that is latent, the reservoir of everything that passes unrecorded or unobserved. It is not only the abode of lapsed memories, stuff that dreams are made of, sub-conscious sensations, obscure impulses, antipathies, and the like;



it has, so to speak, different *strata*. In one *stratum* it is the seat of superior faculties, more subtly perceptive than those of everyday life, and more deeply and widely in touch with the surrounding world; in another, it is the seat of strange forces of creative imagination; in another, it is in contact with higher spiritual influences. The various kinds of "abnormal" and "super-normal" mental conditions are affirmed to be the effect in the supra-liminal self of influences proceeding from the various *strata* of the sub-liminal. There can be little doubt that Myers has gone too far in almost totally dissolving the unity of the mind at each of its levels, and especially in assuming a kind of partition between the supra-liminal and sub-liminal mind. Some writers have carried the same thought further, and assumed two minds of totally different qualities and powers. Nevertheless these extreme views have been suggested by *facts* which are of first-rate scientific importance; and we venture to think that the investigation and testing of the facts—whatever be the scientific fate of Myers' explanation of them—has disproved, on experimental grounds, the supposition that the existence of mind depends on the mechanism of nerve and brain, as physiological science understands these terms.

The general idea emphasised with a massive persistency throughout Myers' work, is one to which we have already made reference: that the promise and potency of powers as yet unrevealed can be detected in human nature. In the earlier part of this book we worked out this conception in reference to the ethical, intellectual, emotional, and higher spiritual factors in our nature. We found in all these real possibilities and (as we may say) demands for fuller life than this earthly body can afford. A consideration of the work of the Society for Psychical Research now compels us to carry this conception further. Just as we found that, as long as the conception of an Unseen World is admitted at all, the relation between the seen and the unseen cannot be limited to ethical and spiritual factors alone,—that there must be at least a possibility of our experiencing it at all the levels of life, even that of sense; so now, we find that the conception of *real but undeveloped human faculty* must also be extended to the level of the imagination and even to that of sense-perception.

In the depths of our being and at every level of our inner life, there are traces of faculties which connect us with a wider realm than that of the visible world. And the

greatest proof of survival, that is, of the persistence and growth of human intelligence and individual personality beyond bodily death, will lie in the development of those faculties as their meaning is gradually realised. Such proof is not attained all at once. It is attained progressively as human nature unfolds its powers. There are undoubtedly in the soul faculties which are outside the limits of ordinary consciousness, which usually lie latent, and only occasionally are unfolded into the realm of consciousness. It seems quite reasonable to suppose that there are many other faculties as yet wholly undeveloped. For thousands of years human faculties have been unfolding, each one having its use and function; and as the latent faculties have developed humanity has entered into new relations with the surrounding world. Unless the universe has wholly deceived us, this is the most significant fact in life, and is itself a promise that this development, which contains within it the potency of vast possibilities, shall continue. If the world is at bottom a harmonious and completed whole, and not "a confusion and dispersion"; if nothing, which exists and shares in the sustaining Life of the Whole, can in the end fail to fulfil the

real possibilities for which it was made; then Man, a being who cannot more than begin to realise his powers in that round of experience which he calls his life in this world, will be granted the further and fuller life that he needs.





## NOTES AND REFERENCES.

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*Note 1, p. 1.* Spencer, Tylor, and others have shown that dreams play an extraordinarily large part in moulding primitive ideas of existence. In dreams a man sees himself and others, together with various common objects of experience; and to all these images he attributes an independent reality. This leads to the notion of a double existence, both for men and for things. All things have images or doubles; and the double has a more free and ethereal existence in contrast to the physical body, which has a coarser and heavier existence. This view of the world is known as "animism." When the image of one who has died appears in a dream, the notion of it as an independent "soul" is greatly strengthened. There is no doubt that this explanation is true and important; but it does not remove the need for what some Continental writers have called a "personifying tendency" in primitive man, leading him to attribute an inner life, resembling his own, to forms which he recognises as outwardly more or less like himself. The "double" seen in dreams is a moving image, resembling the living body seen in waking life; but why should a man attribute mental life to it? Why should he regard it as thinking, feeling,

willing? It is evident that he must have had some vague awareness of a mental life of his own, before he could regard the image even as an animated "double." Hence the dream-theory does not give a complete account of the beginning of the human consciousness of an inner life; the "personifying tendency" must precede "animism." This is the meaning of Siebeck's criticism of Tylor in the *Einleitung* to his *Geschichte der Psychologie*. No doubt the two ideas worked together. Similarly Avenarius, in his book *Der Menschliche Weltbegriff* (ch. iii. and notes), regards animism as supplementary to what he calls "introjection." Duly limited, there does not seem to be any doubt about Tylor's theory (see the chapters on "Animism" in his *Primitive Culture*).

2, p. 4. John Caird, *Gifford Lectures*, vol. ii. p. 280.

3, p. 5. Since this was written, I have read a forcible statement of the same thought in Edward Caird's *Lay Sermons*, pp. 276-7.

4, p. 7. A fine statement of Browning's treatment of the same theme will be found in Mr A. C. Pigou's *Browning as a Religious Teacher*, ch. v. ("God's End for Man").

5, p. 8. Huxley, *Life and Letters*, vol. ii. p. 62.

6, p. 9. The two passages occur in chapters xvi., xvii. respectively, of Lecky's *Map of Life*.

7, p. 18. Huxley, in *The Nineteenth Century*, September 1877.

8, p. 22. John Caird, *Gifford Lectures*, vol. ii. p. 292.

9, p. 28. Osler, *Science and Immortality* (Ingersoll Lecture), p. 17. See also S. M. Crothers, *Endless Life* (Ingersoll Lecture), on the indifference due to mere limitations of experience.

10, p. 36. The conception of the Ideal of man's higher life as progressive and inexhaustible is set forth by Mr A. C. Pigou, *op. cit.*, ch. iv., v., vi. (on "Immortality," "God's

End for Man," and "Progress"). These chapters are valuable not only as a statement of Browning's thought, but for their own sake.

11, p. 37. Mellone, *Leaders of Religious Thought*, pp. 114-124 (on the meaning of "evolution").

12, p. 42. Plato, *Phaedo*, 86a.

13, p. 46. William James, *Human Immortality*, p. 42.

14, p. 46. In his Ingersoll Lecture, *Life Everlasting*, the late Professor Fiske appears to adopt the conception of "Parallelism" in its strictest form, as the final truth about the relation of Mind and Brain. Nevertheless, it must be carefully borne in mind that Parallelism is only an assumption; though, on the other hand, it is an assumption which excludes the old materialistic conception, for it means that no movements of material particles can produce or give rise to anything but further movements of material particles; they cannot give rise to consciousness. (See next note.)

15, p. 47. The doctrine of Parallelism in its metaphysical bearings is discussed by Professor James Ward in his Gifford Lectures on *Naturalism and Agnosticism*, vol. ii. lectures xi.-xiii., and in his article on "Psychology" in the supplementary volumes of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, vol. xxxii. p. 66; also by the present writer in his *Studies in Philosophical Criticism*, pp. 84 ff.

16, p. 49. Newman, "The Invisible World," *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. iv.

17, p. 49. See Professor William James's Ingersoll Lecture on *Human Immortality*, where further references will be found.

18, p. 52. Professor G. F. Stout, in the *Hibbert Journal*, October 1903, pp. 47-8 (a discussion of some of the stranger abnormal and disordered forms of mental life). For an explanation of what is meant by "un-



conscious" mental processes and psychical dispositions, see Mellone and Drummond's *Elements of Psychology*, ch. iii. § 5.

19, p. 54. The application of the instrumental theory to the case of loss of consciousness of the meanings of words (through defect or injury of a certain part of the brain) is typical of its applicability to all cases of loss of memory through similar causes. The most extreme case is that in which *all memory of the past* is totally lost, while other mental functions remain in their normal condition. When such a patient is in the hypnotic state, memories of the past may be recovered, while on his resumption of his ordinary waking consciousness they pass into total oblivion again.

For discussion of the (at present) inexplicable mental disorder known as Multiple or Alternating Personality, see Dr Morton Prince's fascinating volume *Dissociation of a Personality*, and also the following: F. W. H. Myers, *Human Personality*, vol. i. ch. ii.; Prof. G. F. Stout, *loc. cit.*; Dr W. L. Mackenzie, "The Case of Sally Beauchamp," in *Mind*, January 1910; and Dr W. M'Dougall, *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, part lii. (February 1907).

The relation of Mind and Brain is discussed, in the light of the most recent investigations, in Mellone and Drummond's *Elements of Psychology*, ch. v.: where an account is given of some of the functions of the brain, and the limits of the mechanical assumptions of Physiology are considered.

20, p. 63. Munsterberg, *Psychology and Life*, p. 252.

21, p. 68. *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, part xliii., p. 55 (March 1902). See also Lodge's *Survival of Man*, pp. 1, 2, 6, 18, &c.

22, p. 72. Boethius, *Consolatio Philosophiæ*, v. 6.

The translation given is quoted in Mr Philip Henry Wicksteed's striking lecture, *The Religion of Time and the Religion of Eternity* (London, 1899 ; p. 95).

23, p. 74. Alexander Pope, *Essay on Man*, I. ix. 267, and III. i. 1, 21. It is interesting to note how the poet of Roman Imperialism expressed the same thought :—

“Coelum ac terram camposque liquentes  
Lucentemque globum lunae Titaniaque astra  
Spiritus intus alit, totamque infusa per artus  
Mens agitat molem et magno se corpore miscet.  
Inde hominum pecudumque genus vitaeque volantum  
Et quae marmoreo fert monstra sub aequore pontus.”

These lines have thus been paraphrased by the late F. W. H. Myers :—

“One life through all the immense creation runs,  
One Spirit is the moon's, the sea's, the sun's ;  
All forms in the air that fly, on the earth that creep,  
And the unknown nameless monsters of the deep,—  
Each breathing thing obeys one Mind's control,  
And in all substance is a single Soul.”

24, p. 83. Frank Podmore, *Naturalisation of the Supernatural* (1908), p. 210. The book is a careful review of the various classes of phenomena investigated by the Society for Psychical Research, and is written in the cautiously and reasonably sceptical spirit indicated in the quotation.

25, p. 83. The best discussion of the evidence from this point of view will be found in Sir Oliver Lodge's recent book, *The Survival of Man* (1909). The author's conclusions, which are strongly affirmative, are advocated in a critical and scientific spirit.

If the present writer is asked, “Which position do *you* adopt,—that of Podmore or that of Lodge ?” he replies

that the facts seem to him to warrant the more positive conclusion drawn by the latter ; but in the present volume it is not his purpose to advocate either of these positions, he wishes only to make as clear as possible what is at issue, and to advocate a reasonable attitude of mind.

26, p. 87. See Myers' elaborate work on *Human Personality*; and for James's version of the theory his Gifford Lectures on *The Varieties of Religious Experience*.

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